

Constructing a “Culture of Life”: Legislation, Rhetoric, and Public Discourse

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to 1) demonstrate through content analysis that the rhetorical, linguistic, and contextual choices employed in legislation can shape public discourse about political issues, 2) establish that the state uses legislation as a method of reinforcing heteronormative values, and 3) affirm that more focus should be afforded to legislation in the field of rhetorical studies. The focus of this study concerns itself specifically with Kansas House Bill 2253, or the “No Taxpayer Funds for Abortion Act.” A close reading of the Democratic and Republican Party’s respective platform statements on reproductive rights in 2012 serves as the basis for the content analysis; key words and themes were identified from each of those statements as aligning with the Pro-Choice and Pro-Life contexts, which were then applied to H.B. 2253. The legislation defines *how* the public should consider and discuss the issue of abortion through a heteronormative lens, framing it as an undesirable and amoral act with the multiple stipulations and mandates found in the legislation. Given the textual cues and the context within which such politically charged language like “unborn child” is used, the legislation is clearly invoking a conservative audience even though it is addressing a general and diverse audience of women. The rhetorical effect that this language has on public discourse is affirmed with an analysis of the comments section of a *Huffington Post* article about H.B. 2253, in which 25% of the commenters consistently model the rhetoric employed in the legislation. This study demonstrates that the heteronormative rhetoric employed in legislation has a real, tangible impact on public discourse.

Table of Contents

Chapter I: Abortion Rhetoric, State Ideology, and Audience – A Review	1
Introduction	1
Literature Review	2
Chapter II: The Rhetoric of Kansas H.B. 2253 – A Content Analysis.....	17
Methods.....	17
Themes and Words: A Basis for Content Analysis	19
Findings.....	24
Analysis of Legislation	31
Chapter III: Public Discourse in the Virtual Sphere – The Relationship Between Online Comments and the Rhetoric in Legislation	39
Methods.....	40
Analysis of Comments	42
Chapter IV: A Further Understanding – Limitations and Implications	49
Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research	49
Conclusions and Implications	50
Works Cited.....	54
Appendices.....	57
Appendix A.....	57
Appendix B	58

List of Tables

Table 1: Pro-Life Words	21
Table 2: Pro-Choice Words	24

List of Figures

Figure 1: Pro-Life Words – Frequency and Contexts	26
Figure 2: Pro-Choice Words – Frequency and Contexts	29
Figure 3: Terms Referring to Fetus vs. Frequency Used	32

Chapter I: Abortion Rhetoric, State Ideology, and Audience – A Review

Introduction

Signed into law by Governor Sam Brownback in 2013, Kansas House Bill 2253 now counts itself among the most restrictive abortion bills ever implemented in the United States. Kansas has received national attention for H.B. 2253, by defining life as beginning at the moment of fertilization. In addition to the controversial definition of life, Kansas H.B. 2253 eliminates all tax breaks for abortion services providers, prevents anyone associated with abortion services providers from participating in public education, bans sex-selection abortion, and requires that women be given an “A Woman’s Right to Know” pamphlet detailing risks associated with abortion procedures. In discussing legislation dealing with state requirements for abortion services, public policy scholar Marshall Medoff states that “abortion opponents argue that women seeking an abortion need detailed medical information about the abortion procedure in order to be able to make a fully informed decision about a potentially life changing event” (632). Although it is irrefutably crucial for women to be fully informed about detailed medical information related to the procedure, many abortion opponents---and subsequently laws authored by them---are providing women with false or unsubstantiated medical risks. According to Dr. Roger W. Harms, obstetrician and medical editor-in-chief of the Mayo Clinic’s official website, abortion procedures are unlikely to “cause fertility issues or complications in subsequent pregnancies.” While Harms acknowledges that it is possible for the cervix or uterus to be damaged in a surgical abortion, he also stresses that it is “rare.” When the National Cancer Institute conducted a study on the link between pregnancy and breast cancer in 2003, they

determined that there was no link between abortions or miscarriages and an increased risk of developing breast cancer in women.

The major stipulations of Kansas H.B. 2253 seem to clearly articulate legislators' intentions in crafting and implementing this legislation; Kansas H.B. 2253 seeks to deter women from obtaining an abortion procedure. There has been a considerable amount of discussion amongst scholars, politicians, and pundits in recent years about the swing towards criminalizing abortion, but there has been a distinct failure to acknowledge the *effect* of the rhetoric catalyzing the discussion, which comes directly from proposed and/or implemented legislation. The rhetoric, the language, the tone of legislation, must be held accountable for shaping the conversation surrounding abortion and, consequently, public discourse. The rhetoric employed in these bills casts abortion in a morally objectionable light by giving more agency to the fetus than it does to the woman that carries it, therefore attempting to construct "a culture of life," as Kansas Governor Sam Brownback stated at the legislation's signing into law (qtd in McDonough). This study will examine the rhetoric utilized in Kansas H.B. 2253 through content analysis and conduct a close reading of the comments section of an article published on *The Huffington Post* in which the public discusses the legislation, demonstrating that legislation both functions as a means for the state to establish and maintain heteronormative values and plays a pivotal role in shaping public discourse about political issues.

Literature Review

In the extant scholarly literature, opinion is divided as to whether public discourse is affected by the rhetoric employed in legislation. The causal and influential relationship between public discourse and abortion rhetoric can be seen to function in both directions, with public

opinion affecting rhetoric, legislation and regulations relating to abortion; conversely, the rhetoric of such legislative or regulatory measures and documents may have an effect on public opinion and public discourse. Various scholars consider this two-way relationship of causation and influence; most scholars determine that the influence flows more strongly in one direction than another. Celeste Condit, for example, argues that popular discourse regarding abortion is influenced more strongly by the public than by legislative measures; other scholars focus on the influence of legislation's inherent rhetoric on public opinion and discourse. The literature review situates the study in existing abortion rhetoric, state ideology, and audience scholarship, introducing theories that are foundational to the study and revealing gaps in current literature which the study aims to address.

Pro-Life/Pro-Choice Abortion Rhetoric and Public Discourse

The question of how abortion rhetoric in society transformed between 1965 and 1985 is the focus of Celeste Condit's seminal work, *Decoding Abortion Rhetoric: Communicating Social Change*. Condit seeks to consider the topic of abortion rhetoric through a historical and cultural lens, as does this project. Condit indicates there is a need for historically and culturally-grounded research of abortion rhetoric: "Unfortunately, the few studies that have taken serious account of the discourse of the abortion controversy have lacked methodological sophistication or have taken a static, ahistorical perspective" (3). In her study, Condit considers a "set of public discourse[s]" which consist of "mass-circulation magazines with articles about abortion...an examination of the legal discourse in *Roe v. Wade* and related cases and of the U.S. Congressional debates about abortion...prime-time television portrayals of abortion...[and] local media coverage of the Pensacola abortion clinic bombings" (12). Condit's wide range of texts is

meant to highlight “the *American* argument about abortion, describing the vast flows of public discourse that spread across America to shift meaning of abortion and of related terms, practices, and laws” as opposed to “relegating public discourse to a supporting role” (1).

Assessing how abortion was considered in a legal context through examining the proceedings in *Roe*, Condit establishes a number of significant points about the Supreme Court Justices’ original intentions and motivations in legalizing abortion under the Constitutional protection of the right to privacy. Condit notes that Justice Blackmun’s decision regarding the personhood of the fetus “was constrained by the particular relationship between the law and public discourse” (110). This constraint forced him to rely solely on the facts provided by medical research to arrive at the conclusion that “medical criteria did not, in fact, establish that fetus was a human being from the instant of conception, and that, instead, coming to be a human being was a process...Blackmun pointed out that there was no consensus about when life began in the broader, non-legal sense” (110). Considering public persuasion was therefore fruitless, as it could “only influence a judicial decision when there was real consensus” on an issue (111); this consensus was absent when examining the discrepancies between arguments based on science and morality.

As previously stated, Condit’s research focused on abortion rhetoric from 1965 to 1985, meaning that the publications available for her analysis predated the advent of the World Wide Web. In 2015, news stories are published and disseminated on the Internet by the thousands every single day. Flagship print publications such as *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* have attempted to maintain their legacy and remain relevant in the Internet Age, making the same stories available in their enduring hard copy editions online, plus a bevy of features only available on the web. Although they make their stories available online, many established

print publications commonly charge a subscription fee¹ to access a great deal of their content. The web has made free access to current news 24/7 possible in a world that once necessitated a daily, costly subscription to a newspaper and/or cable subscription to be informed. A 2013 Gallup Poll reveals that, while 55% of adults still cite TV as their number one source for news, over 21% cited “the Internet generally or...that they get their news ‘online’,” compared to only 9% declaring that newspapers or other “print publications” were their main source for news (Saad). With more than double the amount of people turning to the Internet over print media for news, Condit’s methodology must be extended to consider the burgeoning medium, a major point of contribution of this study.

Although Condit produces a solid argument supporting the claim that public discourse about a controversial topic can be potentially influential to policy, she overlooks the likely effect that the state’s proliferation of heteronormative views might have on public discourse. Following seminal theorist Foucault, discourse itself is defined as “a form of power that circulates in the social field and can attach to strategies of domination as well as those of resistance” (Diamond and Quinby 185). Utilizing this concept of discourse, it can be seen that public opinion and thought patterns regarding abortion are impacted and shaped by a state’s definition of accepted societal “norms,” which is in direct contention to Condit’s argument that the public influences the state’s position.

Foucault also argues that “Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true”

¹ *The New York Times*, for example, has three separate “digital subscription” options, which can cost readers anywhere from \$195 to \$455 annually.

(*Power/knowledge* 130). Legislation, then, is a kind of discourse that the state produces as part of its “regime of truth,” a discourse that clearly constructs norms and taboos as knowledge, or “truths,” for public acceptance. Moreover, abortion legislation in particular speaks to Foucault’s theory of “bio-power,” which is described as the “numerous and divisive techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and control of populations” (*History* 140); not only is the state using legislation as a discursive means of influencing public discourse, it is using it as a means to regulate social norms and bodies. This study contends that, at present, Condit’s assertions are misguided---the state is using legislation to define and restrict public discourse about abortion so as to fit within the parameters of the socially constructed view of heteronormativity that permeates society.

Laura Woliver’s “Rhetoric and Symbols in American Abortion Politics” looks at the “rhetoric and metaphors in all of the 78 amicus briefs filed in *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*” (5). Examining briefs from those with a demonstrated interest in the outcome of the landmark Supreme Court case, most of which were well-known interest groups, Woliver considers how the briefs discussed and defined the fetus, women, and abortion providers, as well as the concepts of women’s rights and religious freedom (5). Woliver places a high importance on rhetoric, metaphors, and word choice as powerful indicators of ideological views held by those that authored the amicus briefs², which may be accepted or rejected by the Court³. “Word

² In *West’s Encyclopedia of American Law, Vol. 1* authors Gale and Lehman explain that Amicus Curiae literally translates to “friend of the court,” stating that amicus briefs are written by those with a “strong interest in or views on the subject matter of an action, but not a party to the action,” who “may petition the court for permission to file a brief, ostensibly on behalf of a party but actually to suggest a rationale consistent with its own views” (302).

³ Unfortunately, Woliver does not note whether all or any of the briefs that she examined were actually taken into consideration by the Court as they made considered how they would rule in the case of *Webster*.

choice,” Woliver explains, “is even more powerful when it is not explained or defended, but accepted as truth...without questioning or analyzing possible hidden meanings” (6). In failing to justify the rhetoric employed in the amicus briefs, authors give the appearance that they are correct in both their ideas and use of terminology (7) in an effort to influence the public’s perception of the issue.

In her analysis, Woliver finds that, despite their differences in opinion, both Pro-Life and Pro-Choice interest groups adopt similar rhetorical strategies in constructing their radically different arguments: “Both sides...attempt to position themselves as reflective of public opinion,” use “the rhetorical tactic of arguing that their position takes precedence over any other,” and “rely on value-laden terms and ideas, implying that their arguments and reasoning are morally superior” (21). Woliver notes that all pro-life interest groups employed rhetoric indicative of their conviction about “the citizenship of the fetus at the moment of conception” (11), citing the consistent substitution of the medical term “fetus” in favor of over 40 various metaphors, including “unborn children,” “unborn life,” “prenatal life,” and “viable unborn” (7). In addition to assigning unequivocal personhood to the fetus, pro-life interest groups often referred to women as “mother” or “pregnant woman” (7), stripping the woman of any agency and identity in the context of abortion. Contrastingly, Woliver observes that pro-choice interest groups place prominence on themes such as “the rhetoric of democracy and rights,” using phrases such as “reproductive rights,” “freedom of choice,” and “women’s privacy and liberty” in explaining “why access to safe and legal abortion” is not only necessary, but a fundamental right for women (13). Notably, it can be seen that the values enforced by abortion legislation itself--- and also by the language and rhetoric used in legislation and the discourse studied by Woliver---are broadly heteronormative, further affirming the state’s discursive power to impose

social constructions. Woliver's study is of great importance, not only because it reinforces the notion that discourse propagated by the state can influence public opinion, but because it *analyzes* the language and metaphors of pro-life and pro-choice groups, demonstrating their signature linguistic choices and illuminating how their ideology is embodied in their adopted rhetoric.

Right to Choose Discourse

Moving from the domain of the Supreme Court to specific legislation, Eileen McDonagh investigates the rhetoric of abortion legislation, the goals of such rhetoric, and the various legal avenues to discredit or overturn restrictive abortion legislation. In her article, McDonagh states that rhetoric used to create the South Dakota Women's Health and Human Life Protection Act sought to disenable any medical intervention to any pregnant woman with regard to "specific intent of causing or abetting the termination of the life of an unborn human being" (1173). McDonagh observes that considering such specific intent on the part of legislators in regards to abortion raises the issue of the analyzing the language and rhetoric of a unilateral political decision-maker like legislation (1173):

As many legal scholars have recommended for decades, the answer to the question of how to strengthen reproductive rights is to add constitutional guarantees under the Equal Protection Clause to the current foundation of abortion rights based upon the Due Process Clause. There are two models available to invoke equal protection analysis in the context of abortion rights: sex discrimination and fundamental rights (1174).

McDonagh's analysis leads her to the conclusion that "prohibiting a woman's right to choose an abortion is an unconstitutional form of sex discrimination" (1174). McDonagh argues that the regulation of pregnant women by the state is a gendered response, more specifically anti-woman (1175). Therefore, the policy is derived on the "stereotypical assumption" that women are second-class citizens to men and are disenabled to make their own choice due to the assumption of being the weaker sex (1175). The Equal Protection Clause prohibited the "government from pursuing a discriminatory purpose, not only when a discriminatory purpose is the sole purpose for the challenged action, but also when that purpose is a 'motivating factor' for the challenged action" (1175). McDonagh's study is reminiscent of Condit's in that it addresses the significance of "mythic views of women and motherhood" (Condit 106) to the public when considering the validity in the woman's right to choose, both morally and legally. In Condit's examination of *Roe*, those "mythic views" did not win out because there was a lack of consensus about what these meant among the Justices; McDonagh, on the other hand, finds that socially-constructed views of women and motherhood are the *only* things informing the rhetoric restrictive abortion legislation, reaffirming the Foucauldian view on the state's construction and proliferation of norms.

Rhetoric and Discourse as an Agent of Injury

Wendy Brown's book *States of Injury* is relevant to the consideration of issues regarding rhetoric and abortion restriction or regulation. In this work, Brown considers how any group, demographic, or individual can form a realized identity that is based on a sense of being somehow wounded. Clearly, a patriarchal society that oppresses women can be seen to have wounded the demographic of women generally; such oppression is inherent in much of the

discourse surrounding abortion rights, especially from a pro-life perspective. However, Brown's argument is, essentially, that centering a group identity on woundedness and oppression can have the effect of disempowering the individual or group carrying that identity. Legislation or regulation seeking to protect the perceived wounded population can be counter-effective if it makes a need for official "protection" part of that group's identity and perception. In other words, protective regulation and legislation can perpetuate a "victim" status that disempowers the people that the legislation appears to protect.

In the essay "Finding the Man in the State," Brown argues that "the heavy price of institutionalized protection is always a measure of dependence and agreement to abide by the protector's rules" (189). A state of true democracy and empowerment for women--- the population most directly affected by abortion legislation and regulation---requires, according to Brown, a sharing of power rather than enactment of protective legislation. Brown's theory of protection and disempowerment can be applied to the woman who requires abortion services but is restricted in their availability, or to the fetus itself. Much of the rhetoric in abortion-related discourse involves protecting the rights of the fetus. Of course, the population of fetuses is not one that can truly be empowered or disempowered; however, the implication that a fetus requires protection from the woman who carries it is inherently disempowering to that woman. Brown's theory of the state as a powerful actor that disempowers those it keeps in a "victim" or "wounded" identity via regulation or legislation is highly relevant to the current political situation in the United States, in which a majority of politicians and legislators are men who will never personally require abortion services themselves. Brown's argument, at its core, is one for self-empowerment through self-determination and the sharing of power.

Judith Butler extends Brown's thoughts on injury by considering the potential for language itself to cause injury, which is relevant to the argument that legal or other rhetoric regarding abortion has the power to injure or oppress women specifically or certain social groups more generally. Butler indicates that a claim for language-related injury is based on ascribing an agency to language, a power to injure, and position ourselves as the objects of its injurious trajectory. We claim that language acts, and acts against us, and the claim we make is a further instance of language, one which seeks to arrest the force of the prior instance (2).

If McDonagh's argument that abortion restrictions are anti-woman is considered in the context of Butler's theories regarding linguistic injury and performativity, it can be seen that the rhetorical language in abortion legislation is powerful and potentially injurious to the people that it is directed towards.

Audience and Virtual Discourse Communities

Although Condit is correct in stating that the law is written by experts in a specialized jargon (97), it is surely written *for* the public, a general audience that contains a multitude of more specific audiences within it. In the context of abortion legislation, it can be argued that it is written for a general, public audience, but also specifically addresses an audience of women. Classical notions of audience are grounded in oral traditions, yet those notions are certainly applicable to how written political discourse is received by the public audience. While Aristotle argues that "the hearer," or audience, ultimately "determines the speech's end and object" (1.3) by assigning the text a specific meaning, the audience is certainly being persuaded as to what that meaning is through the rhetoric employed by the author. Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford,

notable scholars in the field of Composition and Rhetoric, have made significant contributions to the study of audience theory by addressing the limitations of considering “audience addressed”---the “actual or intended readers of a discourse” (167)---and “audience invoked”---“a construction of the writer, a ‘created fiction’” (160)---independently, instead building a case for merging the two perspectives for a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the reader and writer of a text. When discussing the limitations of solely considering “audience addressed” or “audience invoked” Ede and Lunsford find that:

To argue that the audience is a ‘created fiction’ (Long, p. 225), to stress that the reader's role ‘seldom coincides with his role in the rest of actual life’ (Ong, p. 12), is just as much an oversimplification, then, as to insist, as Mitchell and Taylor do, that ‘the audience not only judges writing, it also motivates it’ (p. 250). The former view overemphasizes the writer's independence and power; the latter, that of the reader. (165)

When considering this in terms of legislation, there are various ways in which legislators can “know” their “real” or “addressed” audience---through election results, voter registration party identifications, polls, and other statistically driven mediums; numbers, however, tell a limited and incomplete story about their audience. Likewise, declaring that the audience is something not grounded in reality (“invoked”) takes away the very real agency that it has to make meaning of a text and take action based on a text’s rhetorical content. Ede and Lunsford’s “audience addressed/invoked” model seeks to account for these gaps in understanding between the independent models, gaps that must be addressed to have a comprehensive understanding of a given audience. Where Ede and Lunsford fall short, however, is in limiting their consideration of who the audience of a given text is to textual cues that they identify within it in their definition of

invoked audience. Textual cues are simply not enough when considering what meaning a text is supposed to have to an audience---context must also be regarded as significant factor in examining the relationship between a text's meaning and interpreting the audience it was created for.

Douglas Park recognizes the inherent need to consider context in a multitude of ways in his article "The Meanings of 'Audience'." In his work, Park highlights numerous contextual concerns in regards to analysis. Park observes that "the task of analyzing audience is a matter of identifying the nature of contexts already given by some aspect of the nature of publication and...those that must be more explicitly defined within the discourse itself. Another part of the task is understanding how particular contexts are created within the discourse" (253). In regards to considering legislation on a global level, there are multiple contexts to take into account when determining its aim and the effect that it can have on public discourse, such as who authored it, the nature of the issue, and the political climate in the state and/or country. On a more local level, however, analyzing the contexts "created within the discourse" (253), or the contexts in which words are employed in legislation, can provide valuable insight into not only who the legislation is for, but how the authors of the legislation want people to consider the issues addressed within it.

Recalling that Condit's methodology for studying abortion rhetoric predated the advent of online discourse, this study proposes to extend her methodology to include the consideration of online discourse as public discourse, thus providing a new method and genre for examining the impact that legislation can have on its audience. Scholars Thomas Poell and José Van Dijck even go so far as to hail online news platforms as potential saviors of professional news production, allowing journalists to find new sources, engage directly with "the people formerly

known as the audience,” as well as trace their preferences and interests (183). Many major online news sources---*The Huffington Post* included---have embedded links in their articles that allows readers to instantly share with their friends or followers, depending on the platform. Outlets such as *The Huffington Post* facilitate an audience’s response to and dialogue with a text and others in a virtual setting, allowing individuals who make up the audience to provide new rhetoric in the form of comments. However, research has found that in most online communities, 90% of users are merely “lurkers” who never contribute to this rhetoric, 9% of users contribute a little, and 1% of users account for almost all of the rhetoric provided (Nielsen 1). Although these statistics reveal that it would be false to identify the comments within an online community as wholly representative of a population of people, it would be just as false to argue that they do not also provide a valuable insights into the public’s perception of the current political climate.

Despite commenting on news articles being a decidedly popular exercise, there has been little consideration of this practice as a form of public discourse in recent scholarship. Patrick Weber observes that a majority of “research on reader comments is conducted in studies on participatory journalism where comments are treated as one of several modes of participation” (942), meaning that the studies are more concerned with how readers interact with each other than framing the content of their discourse in terms of a larger context, such as legislation. Weber also notes that “news websites are particularly important forums in the public sphere because they have the ability to communicate collectively relevant issues to large audiences and to facilitate the formation of public opinion” (942). The discourse which is present in the comments after certain news articles have become an entirely new way for individuals to process news and information, share that information, as well as provide their own unique interpretation of that information. As such, “online comment discourse” on news articles must be

acknowledged as a new, significant, and viable form of public discourse for analysis, one that is just as important as discourse that takes place “offline.”

Entering the Conversation

Although Woliver examines the rhetoric employed in amicus briefs to determine what and how Pro-Life and Pro-Choice groups use language and McDonagh examines the rhetoric of legislation to determine its aim, none of the aforementioned studies analyzes legislation to determine whether it is employing common tropes associated with pro-life or pro-choice rhetoric. Moreover, these studies fail to consider what impact the rhetoric in legislation can have on the audience and, consequently, public discourse about the issue; there is no attempt to draw connections between the legislation and the rhetoric employed in response. Contrary to Condit’s argument that it is the public that shapes popular discourse on an issue, this study seeks to establish that it is the public that is shaped *by* political discourse, namely the rhetoric employed in legislation. The literature review conducted above indicates, overall, that the public audience is---knowingly or unknowingly---influenced by the rhetoric utilized in legislation, as it has the potential to shape public discourse and institutionalize heteronormative values.

What follows is a focused study centering on a specific piece of legislation and the conversation that it catalyzed. Chapter Two will provide an in-depth content analysis of Kansas House Bill 2253, using the Democratic and Republican Party 2012 Platform statements on reproductive rights as the basis for the content analysis; these statements were selected in lieu of those constructed by reproductive rights organizations because they 1) are representative of the political views and affiliations of the politicians who authored the legislation and 2) mission statements made by reproductive rights organizations were too varying in their extremes and thus

failed to provide a solid foundation for the content analysis. Following the content analysis, Chapter Three will offer a close reading of selected comments on an article from *The Huffington Post* about H.B. 2253 and a subsequent rhetorical analysis of those comments in order to gauge the degree of impact that legislation has on public discourse about political issues. Finally, Chapter Four will marry the study findings and relevant theories together for a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between legislation, rhetoric, and public discourse, as well as reflect on the implications of the study findings for the field rhetorical studies.

Chapter II: The Rhetoric of Kansas H.B. 2253 – A Content Analysis

Operating under Condit's assertion that the "law is an interface between the state and a public...[that is] conducted largely by specialists in a specialized vocabulary" (97), the rhetoric of the actual *document* must be given serious consideration in order to understand how the legislation is shaping the public conversation. Legislation, whether rudimentary or controversial in nature, is reviewed and amended by multiple legislators in the drafting process and committee hearings; therefore, painstaking detail goes into crafting the rhetoric of the legislation. If the rhetoric of the legislation does not align with the lawmakers' political ideologies, then it is unlikely that they will support its passing. Moreover, legislators define the public conversation about politically charged issues with the rhetoric they use to frame a given legislation's intentions. In theory, at least, the document that is passed into law is one that legislators have determined is right for the people that elected them, one that constituents ultimately have to prescribe to; the language and themes contained within this document are crucial to understanding its purpose.

Methods

To facilitate examining the legislation's rhetoric in relation to the state's Foucauldian influence on the public, a selection of concise but rhetorically significant, well-known texts were chosen to serve as the basis of the content analysis. The Democratic and Republican 2012 Party Platform Statements regarding reproductive rights were chosen to serve as the basis for examining the rhetoric due to the credibility and widely acknowledged political leanings of each organization, their purpose in addressing the issue of reproductive rights, their employment of

language and/or tropes that are common to the rhetoric of pro-choice and pro-life advocates, and the fact that the legislation was composed by a group of people that identified as one or both these parties. A close reading of each party's statement will be conducted to identify notable themes of how reproductive rights and related issues are being framed for the public in each statement; the legislation in question will then be analyzed for these themes.

In addition to conducting a close reading of each party's platform statements about reproductive rights to reveal any significant themes, keywords that are salient to the discussion of abortion will be identified. These keywords will form a lexicon to serve as the basis for the content analysis of the legislation by identifying the frequency within which each word occurs within the legislation and the context within which each word is used. The contexts for these words will be defined in terms of the following categories: 1) Pro-Life context, 2) Pro-Choice context, 3) Neutral context. For the purposes of this content analysis, any word that is found to be used in a "Pro-Life" context is one that is used in congruence with the ideals of that movement, defined in *The New York Times* article "The New Abortion Rhetoric" as a "reverence for life." Likewise, any word found to be used in a "Pro-Choice" context is one that is used in congruence with the ideals of that movement, defined as "leaving the issue up to the woman and her doctor" ("The New Abortion Rhetoric"). Any identified keywords used in an unbiased or unrelated context will be coded as "Neutral."

Identifying the frequency and context in which these words are used in conjunction with emerging themes will clearly demonstrate how the legislation frames the discussion of women and fetuses for public discourse. The legislation will also be subjected to a close reading in the analysis section to present a more comprehensive look at the content and rhetoric contained within the legislation. While the outlined methodology will significantly further the examination

of the legislation's rhetoric, it may not account for all notable occurrences of politically charged rhetoric within the legislation, which totals 47 pages in length. The close reading of the legislation will consider any major issues and themes that arise upon inspection, as well as any significant information outside the realm of the salient words and themes.

Themes and Words: A Basis for Content Analysis

*Republican Party Platform Statement on Abortion*⁴

At the onset of its statement, the Republican Party's 2012 Platform Statement establishes a strong and defined point of view on the topic of abortion with its bolded opening title: "The Sanctity and Dignity of Human Life." Immediately, the statement establishes a "reverence for life" (The New Abortion Rhetoric") with the words "sanctity and dignity," portraying the issue as one of moral importance to the public, to constituents. According to Republican Party Statement, the issue of abortion is one that can be addressed with the "'self-evident' truths enshrined in the Declaration of Independence" which assert "the sanctity of human life and affirm that the unborn child has a fundamental right to life which cannot be infringed." With this unequivocal statement, they have defined a fetus as a child waiting to be born, an autonomous being entitled to protections under one of the United States' most valued documents. One line into the statement and a theme of "legal protection for the unborn child" has started to emerge from the employed rhetoric, which can be viewed as a moral call to action for the public.

⁴ See Appendix A for full statement

The Republican Party Statement continues with this theme of legal protections by invoking the Constitution, specifically the Fourteenth Amendment, declaring that they “support a Human Life Amendment to the Constitution and endorse legislation to make clear that the Fourteenth Amendment’s protections apply to unborn children.” Those unfamiliar with the Fourteenth Amendment may not be aware that any protections that it provides only apply to “all persons born or naturalized in the United States” (Sec. 1). It is common knowledge that amending the Constitution is easier said than done, but the rhetoric used in the statement makes it seem like a simple and necessary adjustment. With this call for an amendment to the Constitution, the theme of “system reformation” materializes, which can also be viewed as a call for the public to act on protecting innocent lives.

There is an abrupt shift in the middle of the first paragraph of the Republican Party’s Statement, which moves from the idea of protecting unborn children to the idea of protecting “public revenues” from being used to “promote or perform abortion or fund organizations which perform or advocate it.” The rhetorical choice to identify what is typically referred to as “government funds” instead as “public revenues” suggests that the audience---the public---is complicit in all abortion procedures by implying that their funds will subsidize the procedure unless something is done to stop it. This portion of the statement is clearly meant to evoke a visceral feeling from the audience; essentially, even if you don’t support abortion, you still “support” it financially as long as it is legal. From these few words, a theme that can only be identified as “monetary morality” surfaces, assigning the procedure a literal and moral cost to the public.

The statement goes on to declare that “Republican leadership has led the effort to prohibit the barbaric practice of partial birth abortion,” making it indisputably known how the party, and

by extension the Pro-Life movement, feels about the practice. The use of the word “barbaric” highlights the brutal and uncivilized nature with which they perceive the procedure, implying that the public should harbor similar feelings. This rhetoric continues in the same fashion, stating that the Republican Party calls “for legislation...to protect aborting unborn children capable of feeling pain...” This section of the statement is meant to provoke a decidedly emotional reaction from the public, constructing a theme of “emotional stakes” of the rhetorical choices the public is subjected to. This pathos driven rhetoric persists, as the statement closes with the declaration that the Republican Party “affirms our moral obligations to assist, rather than penalize, women challenged by unplanned pregnancies...we take comfort in the tremendous increase in adoptions that has followed Republican legislative initiatives,” continually positioning the party as the moral center of the debate.

At three paragraphs, the Republican Party’s Platform “Statement” on the subject of abortion is decidedly long and ripe with politically charged rhetoric. The following words were identified as salient to the discussion of abortion rhetoric given the Pro-Life context within which they were used:

Table 1: Pro-Life Words

Human (being)	Sanctity	Unborn
Life (live, living)	Death (-d)	Child (-ren)
Traditional	Pain	Family

These words, and any relevant variations of them, are the most politically charged and representative rhetorical artifacts associated with the Pro-Life movement as found within the Republican Party's statement.

*Democratic Party Platform Statement on Abortion*⁵

Just as the Republican Party's 2012 Platform Statement makes its sentiments about the topic of abortion clear with the opening words, so does the Democratic Party's Statement, with the bolded words "Protecting a Woman's Right to Choose." By framing abortion as a "right" of "choice" that must be "protected," the statement conveys to the public the idea of that fundamental right becoming endangered, of women losing freedom so recently gained within the last four decades. The statement continues in the same vein as the opening title, declaring that the "Democratic Party strongly and unequivocally supports *Roe v. Wade* and a woman's right to make decisions regarding her pregnancy, including a safe and legal abortion, regardless of ability to pay." This theme calls for the public to stand with major existing judicial precedents related to abortion; again, this rhetorical strategy is very similar to the Republican Party statement's call "for legislation...to protect aborting unborn children capable of feeling pain..." in that it implies an explicit relationship between abortion and legality. The rhetorical choice to scaffold the argument for legal abortion around maintaining women's rights constructs a theme of "defense of women's rights," which is reinforced with the statement that "we oppose any and all efforts to weaken or undermine that right."

⁵ See Appendix B for full statement

Following this affirmation of a woman's constitutionally protected right to choose, the statement asserts that "Abortion is an intensely personal decision between a woman, her family, her doctor, and her clergy; there is no place for politicians or government to get in the way." The rhetoric employed in this statement invokes a sense of deserved autonomy in the public, one that lies outside the realm of legislation. Notably, the statement includes parties such as "family...doctor...and her clergy" as those relevant to the discussion of a woman's choice. The reference to the aforementioned parties is notable, not only because they are often characterized as absent from the "pro-choice" discussion, but because acknowledging both "family" and "clergy" infers that there can be a moral center to the "pro-choice" position. The theme constructed with this rhetoric, then, is one of "individual agency," imploring the public to think of the myriad of personal matters they deal with every day, ones that they do not wish to be subject to legislation.

The closing words of the Democratic Party's 2012 Platform Statement on abortion contain rhetoric that is just as decisive as the preceding ones. The statement affirms the Democratic Party's well-known position "that health care and education help reduce the number of unintended pregnancies," referring to the need for standardized sexual education in schools, which should "reduce the number of unintended pregnancies." The closing words employ decisive and compelling language to describe the party's position on the relationship between health care, abortion, and alternatives: "We strongly and unequivocally support a woman's decision to have a child by providing affordable health care and ensuring the availability of and access to programs that help women during pregnancy and after the birth of a child, including caring adoption programs." The concluding words of the statement demonstrates a continual theme of "education," whether it be about pregnancy prevention, health care options, or

alternatives to an abortion procedure; this theme demonstrates a desire for the public to know that proliferating knowledge is a key part of the “pro-choice” agenda.

As opposed to the Republican Party’s three-paragraph statement regarding its position on abortion, the statement for the Democratic Party’s Platform stands at one concise paragraph. Despite its brevity, it is still filled with politically charged rhetoric. The following words were identified as salient to the discussion of abortion rhetoric given the Pro-Choice context within which they were used:

Table 2: Pro-Choice Words

Choice/choose	Legal
Health Care	Education
Woman (-en)	Safe (-ty, -ly)
Personal	Family

These words⁶, and any relevant variations of them, are the most politically charged and representative rhetorical artifacts associated with the Pro-Choice movement as found within the Democratic Party’s statement.

Findings

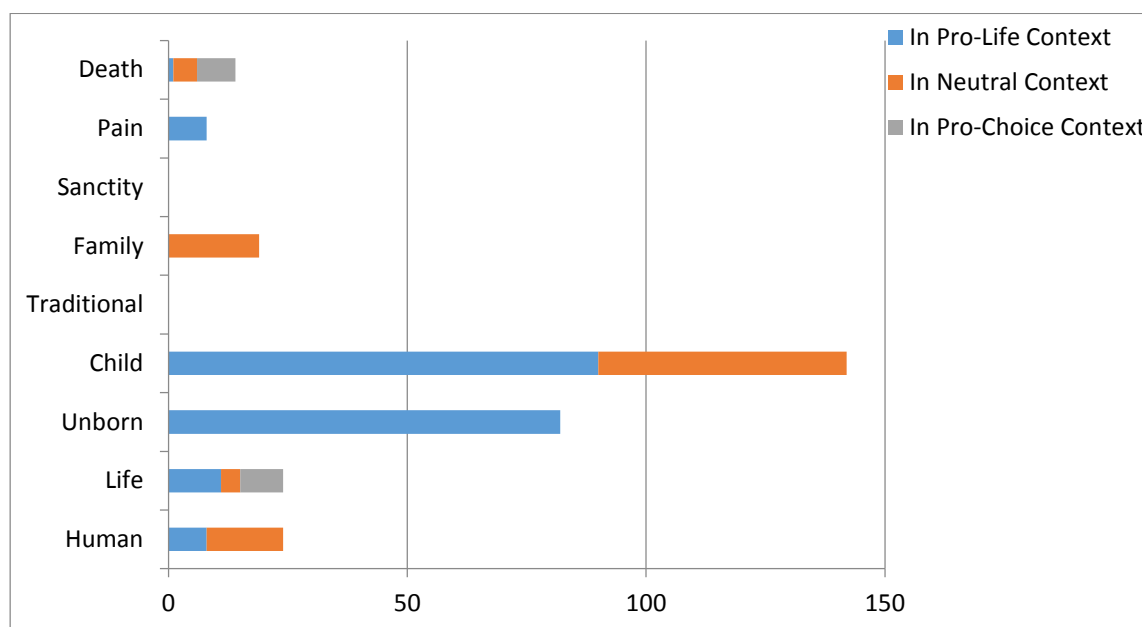
⁶ Due to the shorter length of the Democratic Party’s 2012 Platform Statement on abortion, fewer salient words were identified than in the Republican Party’s 2012 Platform Statement.

Of the pre-selected salient words from the Democratic and Republican Parties' 2012 Platform statements on abortion, 88.2% of them were found in Kansas H.B. 2253; the only words that did not appear were "sanctity" and "traditional," both from the Republican Party's Platform. The context in which the words appeared, however, varied greatly. Only 41% of the salient words found in the legislation were consistently used in the same manner or context as in the political parties' platform statements. Of the words that were found in their original Pro-Life or Pro-Choice contexts 41% of the time, the Republican Party's Pro-Life rhetoric was consistently used 87.5% of the time, while the Democratic Party's Pro-Choice rhetoric was only used consistently 12.5% of the time.

Pro-Life Words and Contexts

Of the seven salient words identified in the Republican Party's 2012 Platform statement regarding abortion, 77.7% of them were present in Kansas H.B. 2253. These words include: "human," "life," "child," and "family," "death," and "pain."

Figure 1: Pro-Life Words – Frequency and Contexts



The words used most frequently and in the Pro-Life context with which they were originally intended were “unborn” and “child,” which often appeared as one unified term: “unborn child.” Of the 142 times that the word “child” was found in Kansas H.B. 2253, it was in the context of referring to a fetus 63.3% of the time. For example, the legislation defines “viable” as “...a reasonable probability that the life of the child can be continued indefinitely outside of the mother’s womb...” (5). The word child was also used in other neutral contexts, such as referring to the child and family services provided by the state and the term “childbirth.” Of the 82 times that the word “unborn” was found in Kansas H.B. 2253, it was in the context of referring to the fetus 100% of the time. For example, the first time the term is used, it is done so stating that “unborn children have interests in life, health, and well-being that should be protected” (1).

Although the words “human” and “life” were not used with the same frequency as the previous words, their use is still an important part of these findings. Of the 24 times each that the

words “human” and “life” were found, “human” was used in the context of describing the fetus 45.8% of the time, while “life” was used in that same context 33% of the time---consistent with Pro-Choice rhetoric. While these percentages may not seem significant, examples of how they were used in the context of referring to the fetus are notable. One of the most telling statements in the legislation is one that uses both of these words to establish a distinctly pro-life idea: “the abortion will terminate the life of a whole, separate, unique, living human being” (8), which is repeated two more times in the document. The word “human” is also used in a neutral context in reference to “human services organizations” for community programs (22), “buildings used primarily for human habitation” (26), “the production of food for human consumption” (28), and “Habitat for Humanity” (36) when discussing tax exempt sales, all of which are wholly unrelated to abortion discourse. Life is used in a neutral context as well, but it is also used in context consistent with Pro-Choice rhetoric by referring to “the life of the pregnant mother” 37.5% of the time.

The words “death” and “pain” were found to have occurred even less frequently than the words “human” and “life,” but still provide important insight into the document’s rhetoric. Although “pain” was only found eight times in the 47 page document, it was used in a Pro-Life context 100% of the time, referring to a feeling experienced by the fetus: “by no later than 20 weeks from fertilization, the unborn child has the physical structures necessary to experience pain” (8). “Death,” on the other hand, was used in multiple contexts throughout the document. Only once out of the 14 times that the word was found in the document was it used in the Pro-Life context of referring to the fetus: “...remove a dead unborn child who died as the result of natural causes in utero” (4). The word is also used in a Neutral context, referring to “death benefits are included in federal adjusted gross income of the taxpayer” (20), a dialogue that is

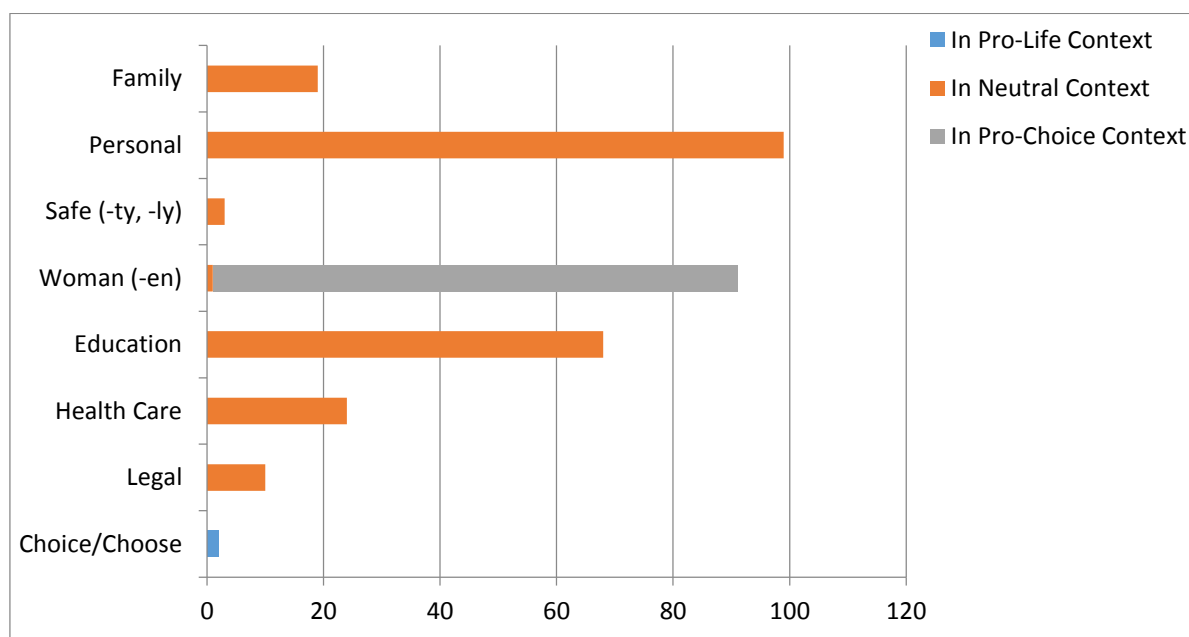
completely unrelated to the issue of abortion, 35.7% of the time. Interestingly, however, “death” is used in a Pro-Choice context 57.1% of the time, more than the Pro-Life and Neutral contexts combined, by referring to the “death of the pregnant woman” (8). That the term “death” is used in reference to a woman’s life is significant, as it signals that the death of a woman is something that is allowable in both the discussion and reality of abortion, far more so than that of the fetus the legislation is striving so greatly to protect.

Although the word “family” was found in the document 19 times, it was used in a neutral context 100% of the time, referring to miscellaneous issues such as “family background” being a deciding factor in determining the necessity of pre-natal tests (3), “family therapists” being defined as counselors (5), and “family post-secondary education savings accounts” in reference to taxable deductions (17). The words “sanctity” and “traditional” and any variations thereof were entirely absent from Kansas H.B. 2253.

Pro-Choice Words and Contexts

Of the nine salient words identified in the Democratic Party’s 2012 Platform statement on abortion, 100% of them were found in Kansas H.B. 2253. These words were: “choice/choose,” “legal,” “health care,” “education,” “human,” “woman (-en),” “safe (-ty, -ly),” “personal,” and “family.”

Figure 2: Pro-Choice Words – Frequency and Contexts



As the table demonstrates, despite the fact that all of the salient words identified from the Democratic Party’s Platform statement appear in Kansas H.B. 2253, only one consistently appears within the Pro-Choice context of the statement. Of the 91 times that the word “woman (-en)” was found in the legislation, it was in the context of referring to the woman carrying the fetus 98.9% of the time: “at 16 weeks, a pregnant woman may begin to feel the unborn child move” (13). The singular time that it was not used in the context was in reference to previously legislation regarding the “Woman’s Right to Know Act” (1), which cannot be considered as a reference to an individual in terms of coding. The only other word that was used in a context associated with abortion was “choice/choose,” but it was not used in the Pro-Choice context with which it is associated. Appearing only twice in the 47 page document, the word was used in reference to a woman choosing to adopt out their “unborn child” instead of keeping it: “Women or couples facing an untimely pregnancy who choose not to take on the full responsibilities of parenthood have another option, which is adoption” (14). This use of the word “choice/choose”

was coded as Pro-Life because it does not refer to a woman's choice to obtain an abortion, but rather to choosing an alternative method for caring for the "unborn child" after it has been carried to term and left the womb. Although Pro-Choice rhetoric uses the word "choice/choose" in the same context as referring to alternatives to abortion, it is not limited to that context as is the case with Pro-Life rhetoric; therefore, it was coded as such.

Despite finding all nine the words in the Democratic Party's Platform statement which are therefore associated with the Pro-Life agenda, seven of them were not used in a Pro-Life context. While "family" was used 19 times, "personal" was used 99 times, "safe (-ty, -ly)" was used three times, "education" was used 69 times, "health care" was used 24 times, and "legal" was used eight times, all of these words were used in a Neutral context to discuss issues wholly unrelated to the topic of abortion. The word "educational" was not used in the context of material or programs to prevent unintended pregnancies, as found in the Democratic Party's Platform⁷. The word "personal" was likewise not used in the same context employed by the Democratic Party's Platform, where it referred to the nature of a woman's decision to have an abortion, but instead to "personal property" in the context of contributions and tax breaks 100% of the time that it was used, which totaled 99. "Safe" and any variations of it were not used to refer to the necessary quality of an abortion procedure in accordance with a Pro-Choice context, but in the Neutral context of referring to devices and upgrades to post-secondary educational institutions (24, 32, 34). Similarly, the word "legal," which refers to the necessary status of abortion procedures in a Pro-Choice context, refers to such issues as a doctor's legal "obligation to take

⁷ Although the legislation is unofficially titled the "No Taxpayer Funds for Abortion Act," it covered multiple issues unrelated to abortion, such as tax credits that can be received by taxpayers for donating to post-secondary educational institutions.

all reasonable steps necessary to maintain the health of the child” (14) and a father’s “legal responsibility to provide for the support, educational, medical and other needs of the child” (14).

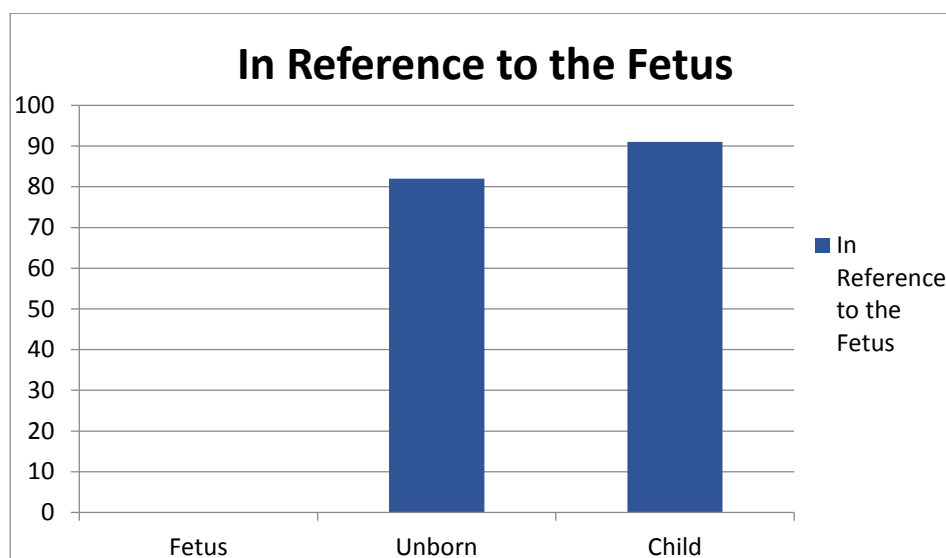
Analysis of Legislation

The content analysis of Kansas H.B. 2253 revealed a series of interesting and unforeseen contradictions between the language that was employed and the rhetorical contexts within which it was used, yet still affirms how legislation is used to shape public discourse, particularly concerning the topic of abortion. One of the most notable and unexpected results of the content analysis revealed that more terms from the pro-choice word list were used---and used more frequently---than terms from the pro-life word list. Despite obtaining a result which indicates on a base level that the legislation trends towards a Pro-Choice agenda due to the heavy frequency with which Pro-Choice words were employed, the context in which these words were used did *not* align with the Democratic Party’s Platform 87.5% of the time. The only word, in fact, that was used consistently and within the context of Pro-Choice language was “woman.” Although Kansas H.B. 2253 consistently refers to the pregnant woman *as* a woman and not a mother, the autonomy that is bestowed upon the woman is overshadowed by multiple rhetorical choices demonstrating the legislation’s attitude towards the issue of abortion, including how the legislation refers to---or perhaps how it does *not* refer to---the fetus.

If, as this study posits, legislation is a means for the state to affirm its power through discourse by constructing knowledge, then it is constructing a very *specific* kind of knowledge for the public; of the seventeen pre-selected salient words based on party platform statements on abortion, the most frequently used word in Kansas H.B. 2253 was “child.” Found in multiple variations in the legislation 142 times, 63.3% of the time the term was used in the context of

describing the fetus; not once in the 47 page document is the word “fetus” used, including passages where language was stricken and revised. In an apparent refusal to use medically appropriate terminology, the legislation is providing the public with Pro-Life rhetoric as a suitable means of discussing abortion, inherently influencing the nature of the discourse.

Figure 3: Terms Referring to Fetus vs. Frequency Used



Ede and Lunsford state that “the writer uses the semantic and syntactic code resources of language to provide cues for the reader---cues which help to define the role or roles the writer wishes the reader to adopt in responding to the text” (160) when invoking a particular audience; by using such emotionally charged terms to refer to the fetus, the legislation clearly invokes a conservative-minded audience, while also directing the general audience to consider the fetus in those terms as well. The rhetorical strategy of referring to the fetus in emotion-laden terms highlights the state’s discursive aim to shape public thought and, consequently, discourse on the issue of abortion by constructing it as something that is morally reprehensible. Were the state not aiming to influence public thought and discourse about abortion, they could refer to it more

neutrally as a “medical procedure.” Foucault’s “regime of truth” is clearly visible in the rhetorical treatment of the fetus in the legislation. Whether the public “reads” the legislation or not is irrelevant; all knowledge about this issue disseminates *from* this text.

By making the rhetorical choice to refer to the fetus as an “unborn child” or “child,” it is demonstrated that the legislation does not support the Pro-Choice theme of “Individual Agency,” which referred to the empowerment of women to make have rights of their bodies. To the contrary, in fact, the legislation supports the Pro-Life theme of “Legal Protection for the Unborn Child” not only by how it labels the fetus, but by explicitly stating that “unborn children have interests in life, health, and well-being that should be protected” on the first page. This theme is further reinforced by the mandate that abortion service providers must make visible a sign that says “Notice: It is against the law for anyone, regardless of their relationship to you, to force you to have an abortion...” (10), whereas that sign might contain alternative language such as “Notice: It is against the law for anyone, regardless of their relationship to you, to force you to *not* have an abortion” if the woman’s agency was truly a priority in this legislation. The evident favoring a fetus’ agency over a woman’s recalls Brown’s theory of injury, reinforcing the disempowerment of women by suggesting that fetuses must be protected from them.

One particularly notable way in which the word “child” was employed and not coded as referring to the fetus was “childbirth.” In this context, legislators have completely bypassed the notion that the fetus would be aborted, instead referring to materials available to help the pregnant woman address financial concerns once the “child” has been delivered: “a directory of services is available...to make an adoption play for your baby...or locate...medical and financial assistance during pregnancy, during childbirth, and while you are raising your child” (11). The deliberate rhetorical choice to refer to the birth of the fetus as an eventual reality, as an organism

that will become a “child,” demonstrates a clear Pro-Life agenda in the legislation’s rhetoric, which suggests that the legislation is meant to persuade the public into viewing a fetus in the same manner as it is discussed within the legislation, as a “(unborn) child.” Recalling Woliver’s observation that “Word choice is even more powerful when it is not explained or defended, but accepted as truth...without questioning or analyzing possible hidden meanings” (6) is critical to understanding the significance of the metaphors employed in H.B. 2253. The legislation clearly embodies a Foucauldian concept of truth and knowledge by creating social norms for the public to abide by.

In extending the discussion of the legislation’s rhetorical choice to label what is medically considered a fetus as a “child,” the content choice of not only including it in the legislation, but *mandating* the distribution of a text that gives a week-by-week narrative of the development of the “child” in the womb must be given due consideration. This narrative, which must be shared with all women seeking an abortion procedure, opens by reaffirming one of the most controversial elements in the 47 page legislation: “Pregnancy begins at fertilization with the union of a man’s sperm and a woman’s egg to form a single cell embryo. This brand new being contains the original copy of a new individual’s complete genetic code. Gender, eye color, and other traits are determined at fertilization” (12). The legislation continues this narrative by providing a step-by-step, week-by-week glimpse into what occurs in the womb during a pregnancy. For example, the legislation states that “By 22 weeks...The unborn child reacts to stimuli that would be recognized as painful if applied to an adult human...Between 20 and 23 weeks, rapid eye movements begin, which are similar to the REM sleep patterns seen when children and adults have dreams” (13). This rhetoric is clearly not intended to reinforce the Pro-Choice theme of “Defense of Women’s Rights,” but rather the Pro-Life theme of “Emotional

Stakes” by describing the “unborn child” as having feelings and experiences that adults are confronted with every day while still in the womb. By using terms, ideas, and employing themes that will likely influence the public to make an emotional investment, the legislation curbs the idea that an abortion is simply a medical procedure for a woman, but one that “will terminate the life of a whole, separate, unique, living human being” (8); through the lens of the legislation, the idea that this “invokes” a conservative-minded audience is an absolute, one that will shape public discourse about abortion.

The finding that more Pro-Choice coded words were used out of context, but Pro-Life coded words were used more frequently in context illuminates an interesting tension, or perhaps discrepancy, in regards to the rhetorical choices taking place in the legislation. By using a variety of words coded as Pro-Choice based on political party statements, it would appear that the legislation---and, by extension, the Republican legislators that composed the it---is attempting to mimic, or perhaps in some way appropriate language that is commonly associated with a Pro-Choice agenda. Park states that the writer, which is legislators in this case, creates “a context into which readers may enter” (249); in the context of this legislation, the audience is introduced to Pro-Choice words that are remolded for the legislators’ purposes. For example, in a Pro-Choice context, the terms “life” and “death” are most commonly associated the woman, whereas they would likely refer to the fetus in a Pro-Life context. Although the intentions behind doing this may at first seem ambiguous, it could be argued that there is much to be gained from appropriating language used by your opponent, no matter what the issue is. Once a term is taken and molded in such a way that it coincides with a particular agenda, it creates doubt about how the opposing side is using the language; essentially, it leads to questioning the credibility of the “other side,” which is Pro-Choice in this case, by opening a potentially troubling line of

questioning, such as whether or not they have been using the term or phrase in question correctly or not, as well as the strength of their terms---does their term carry significant weight or meaning if it can be altered so easily? Although this occurrence cannot be considered as demonstrating the Pro-Life theme of “System Reformation,” it is a reformation and appropriation of terminology that merits reflection.

In regards to the theme of “Education,” which is associated with the Pro-Choice agenda to provide knowledge and materials to prevent unintended pregnancies via sexual education, the only reference to the topic comes in the form of the following decree to the general “addressed audience” (Ede and Lunsford 167) of constituents:

New Sec. 4. No school district, employee or agent of, or educational service provider contracting with such school district shall provide abortion services. No school district shall permit any person or entity to offer, sponsor or otherwise furnish in any manner any course materials or instruction relating to human sexuality or sexually transmitted diseases if such person or entity is an abortion services provider, or an employee, agent or volunteer of an abortion services provider (1-2).

While this is a brief passage in the 47 page document, it is a significant one because it concretely identifies anyone associated with abortion services providers as unqualified to speak to children, not just about sexual occurrences, but about anything at all, as it prohibits them from working in the education system. The legislation, then, seeks to restrict both who can work for a school district and provide sexual education, but whom the public should see as *fit* to work for a school district and provide sexual education. One conclusion to draw from this section, which was apparently necessary to add to the legislation, is that Republican, or Pro-Life, legislators do not

want rhetoric used to discuss issues like sexuality and pregnancy used when addressing school age children, as it would impede their efforts to proliferate culture of Pro-Life rhetoric. The message that this passage ultimately sends to the public is that Pro-Life rhetoric is the only acceptable rhetoric to be used where education is concerned, further exemplifying a Foucauldian construction and dissemination of knowledge for public consumption.

The only theme yet to be discussed is perhaps the most relevant one of them all, given the legislation's unofficial title of "No Taxpayer Funds for Abortion Act": the Pro-Life theme of "Monetary Morality." Like the theme of "Education," it is not one that appeared overtly through the content analysis, as themes such as "Legal Protection of the Unborn Child" and "Defense of Women's Rights" were revealed to be present or absent through that method; the theme of "Monetary Morality" is apparent, however, in a close reading of the legislation. The major stipulations of the legislation include the assertion that no state funds shall go towards abortion services, those who provide abortion services will not receive tax breaks or exemptions that other health care providers are privy to, women who obtain abortions cannot include the cost of them in their medical expenses if they deduct them on their income taxes, and state-run health care facilities will not provide abortion services, nor will state funds go towards facilities that provide abortion services (1). The major point of discussion, then, is the question of "Monetary Morality," what is morally acceptable to fund and what is not. With these stipulations and the rhetoric used to impose them, the legislation pronounces abortion as something morally objectionable and therefore financially objectionable for the public, a pronouncement that is expected to carry over to the public conversation surrounding abortion---"if I don't support, then why should my tax dollars have to pay for it?" An audience may very well make meaning of a text as Aristotle posits, but the legislation clearly delineates the meaning that the state *wants* the

audience to associate with abortion---which is that it is morally and financially intolerable. The next chapter will further explore this relationship between the state and public discourse by focusing on online comments on the legislation.

Chapter III: Public Discourse in the Virtual Sphere – The Relationship Between Online Comments and the Rhetoric in Legislation

While there are many news sources that have debuted online in the past two decades, *The Huffington Post* is, perhaps, the most notable. Launched in 2005, *The Huffington Post* is a multifaceted digital publication described as a “Pulitzer Prize-winning source of breaking news, features, and entertainment, as well as a highly engaged community for opinion and conversation” (“*The Huffington Post Announces...*”). In just nine years, it has acquired “46 million monthly unique U.S. visitors and 78 million monthly global unique visitors” (comScore qtd in “*The Huffington Post Announces...*”). In addition to cultivating original content, the news source also aggregates stories from other publications, such as blogs, and publishes them on their main website. *The Huffington Post* undoubtedly owes much of its success to social media, as buttons to share news stories on major social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are embedded in every article. With news stories that have such far-reaching viewing potential and increasingly growing “highly engaged community for opinion and conversation,” *The Huffington Post* functions as the most logical online publication to focus on for this analysis of how legislation can shape public discourse.

Shortly prior to the passage of Kansas House Bill 2253, *The Huffington Post* published John Hanna’s *Associated Press* article entitled, “Kansas Abortion Bill Passes House, Sent to Governor for Signature.” The article is not an opinion piece, but an objective look at H.B. 2253’s stipulations contextualized in then-current abortion-related legislation news. Hanna’s discussion of the legislation is supplemented by points of view from legislators and pundits that both supported and opposed the legislation. Just below the headline, is an embedded social media

“counter” that both allows you to share the article on Facebook, Twitter, and Google+ and to see how many other people have done so; there is also a tally of the number of comments on the article itself. As of December 2014, the article has 5.1k Facebook “likes” and 1544 Facebook “shares”; it has been the subject of 203 “tweets” and been shared a mere nine times on Google+. Although it is noted that “Comments are closed on this entry” at the bottom of the page, the counter at the top reveals that exactly 10,478 comments were posted before that closure occurred. Some of the 10,478 comprise precisely 1,647 “conversations,” meaning that at least one response was posted to another’s comment.

In an online forum that fosters open discourse such as article commentary, the public audience is given the opportunity to instantly interact with a text, writing original comments on the constructed meaning of a text as well as in response to another’s perspective. As Ede and Lunsford observe, “In a digital world, and especially the world of Web 2.0, speakers and audiences communicate in multiple ways and across multiple channels, often reciprocally” (48). The roles of writer and reader are not strictly divided; in fact, they “often conflate, merge, and shift” in these digital platforms that provide new speeds and flexibilities for communication (Ede and Lunsford 48). Meaning is being reaffirmed, questioned, and created by the public on the Internet, especially in comment platforms such as those hosted at the end of articles on *The Huffington Post*.

Methods

Considering the growing importance of public discourse in online comment platforms, the comments section of Hanna’s article on H.B. 2253 is crucial for the analysis of how the rhetoric in legislation impacts public discourse. *The Huffington Post* has comments on articles

divided into multiple sections: “Highlighted,” “Most Recent,” “Oldest,” “Most Faved,” and “My Conversations.” As 10,478 comments and 1,647 conversations is far too great a number to consider, the top twenty “Most Faved” conversations will be the focus of the analysis, looking specifically at the initial comment that started the conversation and the first reply to it. The “Most Faved” section was chosen because it is based on the number of people indicating that they either agree with the original commenter or find the conversation in some way interesting; the first reply is considered as it can function as a rebuttal of sorts to the designated popular opinion.

The top twenty “Most Faved” conversations, the initial comment and first reply, will be analyzed according to the rhetoric employed in H.B. 2253, which was found to have a strong Pro-Life leaning in the previously conducted content analysis in Chapter 2. The content analysis found that H.B. 2253 consistently used metaphors in favor of the medically sanctioned term “fetus,” such as “child,” “unborn child,” “human,” or “living being.” Several key themes also emerged in H.B. 2253, such as the need for the “child” to have legal protection, which is closely aligned with the desire to reform the current definition of citizen as it stands in the Fourteenth Amendment⁸, and the “immorality” of allocating public funds to facilities that provide abortion services. In light of those findings, the comments will be analyzed specifically for those Pro-Life metaphors and themes used in H.B. 2253, as well as metaphors and themes most common to both Pro-Life and Pro-Choice rhetoric. Despite the glaring discrepancy between the amount of people who read comments and ones who actually post them (Nielsen), the comments that are

⁸ To review the stipulations of Fourteenth Amendment, see page 22.

most representative of the majority opinion(s) will serve as the focus of the analysis.

Analysis of Comments

In examining the initial comments and replies of the top twenty “Most Faved” conversations on John Hanna’s article “Kansas Abortion Bill Passes House, Sent to Governor for Signature” housed on *The Huffington Post*, it was found that 25% of the commenters modeled the Pro-Life rhetoric used in Kansas H.B. 2253; these commenters demonstrated concern for what Woliver describes as “the citizenship of the fetus” (11), or indicated that they were supportive of the legislation’s overall goals. On the other end of the spectrum, 37.5% of commenters employed Pro-Choice rhetoric that echoed Woliver’s previously identified themes of “freedom of choice” and concern for “women’s privacy and liberty” (13) or indicated that they opposed the legislation’s overall goals. The remaining 37.5% of commenters either did not directly reference abortion or the legislation in their comments or made off-topic comments or devoid of substance⁹.

“The Citizenship of the Fetus”

Kansas H.B. 2253’s most notable feature is stating that the “life of each human being begins at fertilization” (1) and subsequently referring to the fetus as an “(unborn) child” throughout the length of the legislation, sentiments that 25% of commenters shared when discussing the issues at hand, a statistically significant number for a publication that trends

⁹ For example, brt929 writes, “Why don’t you try staying on topic?” and Kathy Levittown writes, “Hugs... ☺” in response to conversation starting comments.

towards younger, liberal readers. Many of the commenters that used the metaphor of “child” to refer to the fetus expressed emotional outrage at the idea of abortion and simultaneous relief at the impending implementation of H.B. 2253 in Kansas. For example, Paul P. writes that “it’s about time states start to wipe out abortions! it’s so wrong to kill a child, the only way an abortion should be allowed is if a woman got raped! [sic]” In his comment, Paul P. not only models the rhetoric used in H.B. 2253, but he also implies that his argument is the “morally superior” one, which Woliver notes is common to both Pro-Life and Pro-Choice rhetorical strategies (21).

Paul P. is not alone in his affirmation of the state’s construction of abortion. Tracy Root expresses her dismay at a society in which people are “trivializing” life, where Pro-Choice supporters have removed the “conversational term of “baby” out of their arguing points to where their supporters don’t even understand anymore this is a life completely SEPARATE from their own.” Only a few spaces underneath Tracy Root’s comment, ChrisMM refers to Dr. Kermit Gosnell, known for being outspoken about supporting and performing abortions, as “evil,” going on to state that:

There is no difference between a child in the womb and a child outside the womb.

1. Their DNA is 100% human. Are the physically or mentally disabled not human? Then why would a still-developing person not be human?

2. All babies need people to survive, in or out of the womb. Adults also need others to survive for any extended period of time.

3. When that baby is conceived, a woman's body, by biological design, is no longer *just* her own. If babies are just part of the mother's body, why do fathers have any obligations.

Although “evil” undoubtedly has a negative connotation, ChrisMM seems to diverge from trying to position the argument against abortion as one that is correct because it is morally superior. Instead, ChrisMM appears to frame the argument as one that is correct in its logic, recalling Woliver’s observations that “the rhetorical tactic of arguing that their position takes precedence over any other” is common in discussing abortion (21), pointing out three specific reasons---some based in science and others in what can only be described as common sense---why “there is no difference between a child in the womb and a child outside the womb.” In ChrisMM’s view, the “injured” party seeking protection is the fetus, not the woman, or “mother,” carrying it. ChrisMM’s perception of injury is very reminiscent of the concept disseminated by H.B. 2253, which clearly states that “the abortion will terminate the life of a whole, separate, unique, living human being” (8). Although it is possible that these views were held by ChrisMM prior to the legislation’s implementation and review on *The Huffington Post*, his comments still demonstrate the likely power that H.B. 2253 has to influence public discourse by defining what constitutes “life” given that his prior views cannot be established.

In *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, Foucault asks some very interesting questions concerning the links between discourses, the effects of power, and the knowledge formed as a result of that linkage (11) that are certainly relevant to this discussion. For the purposes of this analysis, H.B. 2253 is a form of discourse composed by the state, the hegemonic power, in an effort to construct an explicit form of knowledge about abortion; the comments on *The Huffington Post* article, too, are a form of discourse in response to the legislation, demonstrating what knowledge has actually been constructed as a result of the legislation. Therefore, when H.B. 2253 refers to abortion as a procedure that terminates “the life of a whole, separate, unique, living human being” (8), it is disseminating the knowledge that abortion “kills” the “child,” and

when Paul P. and others demonstrate that knowledge is accepted truth by modeling the rhetoric found in H.B. 2253, they affirm that the state has been successful in its goal of creating that explicit form of knowledge.

“Women’s Privacy and Liberty”

When the previously-mentioned Tracy Root laments a society that trivializes life, she is met with Michelle W.’s question of “Why do you trivialize the life of a woman?” Michelle W. is not alone in wondering how the woman is supposed to manage in a world where “unborn children” must be protected from them. Although 25% of the comments on *The Huffington Post* article modeled the rhetoric of Kansas H.B. 2253, 37.5% of commenters demonstrated a clear objection to the legislation’s consideration---or lack thereof---of women, an unsurprising result given that *The Huffington Post* is widely known for catering to a liberal readership. Peter Grazia’s comment implies that the legislation presents a disturbing portrait of religious injustice and gender inequality: “This is *NOT* about balancing the budget nor bringing down the debt. That much is clear. It’s about Republicans confusing Church and State. Republicans are not calling for any medical restrictions on men’s health care. It’s discrimination. It’s un-Constitutional.”

By identifying the practice of discrimination---precisely as McDonagh classifies other examples of abortion legislation (1174)---Peter Grazia relates to Brown’s theory of injury, highlighting how H.B. 2253 is using the establishment of rights, or protection, as a “technique of domination” (15) by the state. Brown declares that “rights are more likely to become sites of the production and regulation of identity as injury than vehicles of emancipation” (134). Although H.B. 2253 states that women can still obtain abortion procedures in Kansas, they can only do so

if they adhere to the numerous stipulations that the law seeks to implement; it is not “protecting” their right to obtain an abortion---it is *limiting* their right. Whereas most may think of legislation as something that exists to ensure peoples’ protection, it is clear that the “rights” afforded in H.B. 2253 do nothing more than attempt to regulate a woman’s identity, forcing women to assume/maintain the social position of “injured.”

The rhetoric and goals of H.B. 2253 frame women as perpetrators while also making victims of them, according to Brown’s theory of injury. The very nature of H.B. 2253 is disempowering to women who, perhaps, need the most help from the state. H.B. 2253 seeks to regulate women by reaffirming their injured, or wounded, status in society, while chastising them for even supposing that their agency outweighs that of an “unborn child.” Wolf_Larsen writes that, while the debate over at what point a fetus is viable is ongoing, there is one discussion of viability that has never been a debate at all:

There is no argument on the viability of the life of the mother. That is settled.

There is a great deal of disagreement about when a VIABLE life begins. A woman has sole dominion over the course her life will take and the sanctity of her body. No law should dictate something so personal....private and emotional.

You do not have to agree...you merely have to accept that EVERY woman has the right to determine the course of her life and the treatment of her body....

Like Peter Grazia’s comment, Wolf_Larsen’s is built on the idea of taking issue with the legislation’s positioning of women as injured, highlighting the illogical inconsistencies that underscore the protection of the fetus over a legally recognized citizen. For Wolf_Larsen, it is not a matter of opinion, of “agreeing,” but a fact that must be “accepted”---laws “should not

dictate something so personal...EVERY woman as the right to determine the course of her life and the treatment of her body..."---women should not be framed as injured citizens.

Not only does Wolf_Larsen's comment align with Brown's theory of injury, it also speaks to Foucault's theory of bio-power. Legislation, here, can certainly be positioned as a "technique" for implementing the regulation that Foucault speaks of. Although the rhetoric in H.B. 2253 openly regulates all women, there is an implied regulation of a *certain* kind of woman. According to Foucault, "where sex & pleasure are concerned, power can 'do' nothing but say no to them" (83). Foucault's observation is of great relevance, as it can be posited that H.B. 2553 is specifically speaking to those women that may be identified by some as "promiscuous," being sexually active for a reason other than to procreate, outside the bounds of heteronormative, state-sanctioned matrimony. This idea is only reaffirmed by another commenter, Delores Easthom, who does not agree with the idea of sex for the sake of pleasure: "PRAISE THE LORD. Women should have enough common sense to use a contraceptive if they are going to have sex. God intended sex for married male and female to multiply the earth. Our people fall for lack of knowledge, and they should THINK before they act." According to Delores Easthom, sex is not something to be had freely, but an act to further the population, a distinctly heteronormative ideal. Those that do have sex for something other than procreation, particularly those that are unmarried, are "falling" and acting without thought---acting outside the heteronormative roles established by the state as "norms."

In 2010, The Guttmacher Institute's study of United States abortion patients in 2008 revealed that 85% of women having abortions were unmarried (Jones et. al). With H.B. 2253, the state, just as Foucault said, is saying "no" to sex for the sake of pleasure instead of procreation. More specifically, the legislation is saying "no" to the women that have sex outside of marriage,

disempowering them for acting freely, seeking to regulate their bodies as if they were property of the state. Furthermore, the metaphorical act of saying “no” harkens back to Butler’s argument for language’s potential to inflict injury, to “act and act against us” (2) as the rhetoric of H.B. 2253 is surely acting and acting against the interests of women as a whole, injuring their inherent agency. Wolf_Larsen’s argument for “EVERY” woman’s right, one echoed by 35% of commenters, has identified the blatant institutionalization of heteronormative values as inherent to H.B. 2253. Regardless of whether the comments reinforce a Pro-Life or Pro-Choice ideology, their authors clearly highlight the heteronormative values implicit in the legislation.

Chapter IV: A Further Understanding – Limitations and Implications

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

Although a major claim of this project is that abortion legislation defines the public conversation about the issue based on performing a content analysis and close reading, the study was limited to only one piece of abortion legislation, Kansas H.B. 2253. For the results of this analysis to be affirmed, a study of multiple pieces of recently passed abortion legislation would have to be conducted utilizing identical methods. For a more comprehensive look at how legislation has impacted public discourse, it would be prudent to further adopt Condit's methodology of looking at a *series* of news articles, political debates, and interviews following the implementation of H.B. 2253 in Kansas; performing a content analysis of those texts in conjunction with the legislation itself could reveal significant ways in which legislation shapes, or does not shape, discourse surrounding a major political issue. Moreover, analyzing texts of different genres could also have significant implications for the field of genre studies.

In regards to the methods of the study, they could be strengthened by extending the basis for content analysis beyond those words found in the Democratic and Republican Parties' 2012 Platform Statements on abortion to other relevant forms of discourse on the topic, such as mission statements from Pro-Life and Pro-Choice organizations and speeches given by Pro-Life and Pro-Choice proponents, so as to include more salient words in the content analysis of the legislation and verify or negate the saliency of the words selected from the political parties' platform statements. This method would be best for a project larger than this, one that could be more inclusive of statements from multiple organizations.

The analysis of the online public discourse could also be extended beyond one site and one political ideology. Although *The Huffington Post* is a flagship online publication, its readership is comprised of a younger, more liberal demographic than those that still turn to print publications for news, which certainly influences who comments on its articles. If there was a conservative equivalent to *The Huffington Post*, it stands to reason that the results of the comment analysis would have been more statistically significant in terms of modeling Pro-Life rhetoric. Speaking in terms of the comment analysis, it was impossible to read and analyze over 10,000 comments for this project; I attempted to construct a methodology that would aid in selecting the comments most salient to this analysis, but it was just a small glimpse of what the comments section has to offer. The ability to analyze comments from sites similar to *The Huffington Post* would strengthen the study's claims.

In order for this study to be replicated, more online publications like *The Huffington Post* should be identified. If multiple articles, and consequently comment sections, on H.B. 2253 could be analyzed, it would be immensely helpful in determining the saliency of the argument about legislation's impact on public discourse.

Conclusions and Implications

In the case of abortion, this state-regulated and state-published "norm" has been fluid and dynamic, and at times the discourse, public opinion and state regulation or legislation regarding abortion are at different points in development at the same time in history. The glaring inconsistencies in attitudes towards abortion are apparent when various state requirements are examined. According to the Guttmacher Institute's data, which is current as of May 1, 2015, in Iowa, South Carolina, and Virginia, an abortion may be performed up to the third trimester if the

woman's life is in danger; Mississippi, North Carolina, and Nevada stipulate that an abortion may only be performed up to 20 weeks except if the mother's life is in danger; and Arizona, California, and Connecticut specify that an abortion may be performed only up to the point of "viability" with exceptions made for the mother's health. Iowa, then, appears far more concerned with ensuring a woman's health and safety than North Carolina, whose mandates seem designed to favor the life of the fetus over the life of the woman. These varying requirements demonstrate an inconsistency in laws regarding abortion that must be acknowledged to understand both how divisive the issue is and how provocative abortion legislation can be at the state level. This examination is an important opportunity to highlight the lack of a consistent, established norm concerning abortion, as well as an occasion to call for a more clearly demarcated set of definitions and mandates at the federal level, so that a woman may have access to the medical procedure regardless of what state she resides in.

Kansas House Bill 2253 exemplifies the restrictive nature of legislation regarding abortion that has been introduced and passed in the last six years. Although terms associated with the Pro-Choice Agenda were found more frequently than those associated with the Pro-Life agenda in the content analysis of H.B. 2253, the context in which they were found is largely divorced from how those terms are employed in the Pro-Choice discussion of abortion. With the consistent use of metaphors like "unborn child," the legislation elevates the fetus over the woman's autonomous and legally protected right under *Roe v. Wade* to end her pregnancy. In doing so, it defines *how* the public should consider and discuss the issue of abortion by framing it as an undesirable and amoral act with the multiple stipulations and mandates found in the legislation. The legislation's pervading influence on public discourse has made a gradual, but certain leap from the local public of the state of Kansas to a national one; only 13 months after

Kansas passed H.B. 2253, legislators in Washington D.C. passed a federal bill by the same name, “No Taxpayer Funds for Abortion Act.” The effect that legislation, even on the state level, has at starting a national conversation on a topic is evident when considering the rapid rise of abortion restrictive laws that coincide with a Pro-Life agenda. The rhetoric employed in abortion-related legislation such as Kansas H.B. 2253 does more than impose restrictions and stipulations on a medical procedure; it demonstrates the state’s power to define social norms and public discourse about abortion.

This study of Kansas H.B. 2253 and subsequent comments about it demonstrates that there is a measurable relationship between the rhetoric utilized in legislation and public discourse about politically charged issues. H.B. 2253 employs the deliberate rhetorical choice of substituting the term “fetus” for that of “child” or “unborn child” throughout the legislation, which is exactly how one-fourth of commenters referred to the fetus as well. While 25% is by no means a majority, it is still a statistically significant number of commenters that modeled the rhetoric employed in Kansas H.B. 2253. When mgimhh11 states that, “there are some of us who do not believe that taking the life of a child is ‘okay,’ by any standards,” it is not only an affirmation of the legislation, but a demonstration of the legislation’s power to influence public discourse on abortion. Those comments in which approval for the legislation is shown also reinforces Foucault’s theory of the state’s establishment of heteronormative values as truth for the public’s acceptance.

Furthermore, the 37.5% of comments arguing against the legislation emphasize its propensity to frame women as injured citizens in accordance with Brown’s theory, specifically those that do not abide by the state’s established heteronormative values. H.B. 2253 is certainly constructing a “culture of life,” as Governor Sam Brownback stated, but at the expense of

women's agency. Scholar McDonagh and commenter Peter Grazia both identified abortion-restrictive legislation as a form of sex discrimination, but it also discriminating against untraditional lifestyles. Considering that a vast majority of women seeking abortions are historically unmarried (Jones et. al), it stands to reason that this legislation is implicitly designed to regulate their bodies and actions, an argument upheld by Foucault's theory of bio-power. Legislation not only serves to establish heteronormative values, but to regulate bodies by ensuring that those "mythic views of women and motherhood" identified by Condit (106) endure in present society.

The finding that legislation has rhetorical significance for the audience's public discourse has weighty implications for other political issues, specifically social ones, such as those dealing with gender, race, and sexuality. Especially with gay marriage becoming increasingly legalized throughout the country, attention should be paid the rhetoric employed in the implementation of those laws to understand how it is altering the long-institutionalized heteronormative values of the state and, consequently, public discourse. Perhaps, if the rhetorical and institutional shift of gay marriage can be realized, a greater understanding of how to change the narrative for women in the United States could be acquired. In the context of abortion rhetoric, allowing women a greater voice in the discussion and ensuing legislation or regulation would be one such way of sharing power more meaningfully. Legislation has powerful implications for defining what is socially acceptable, including constructing a "culture of life" in public discourse, as Kansas House Bill 2253 demonstrates. Given this study's findings, there is a significant case to be made for rhetorical studies devoting as much focus to legislation as it does to political debates, interviews with politicians, opinion editorials on politics, and other forms of political discourse; after all, it is the law that drives those forms of discourse to their perceived significance.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Republican Party 2012 Platform Statement on Abortion:

“THE SANCTITY AND DIGNITY OF HUMAN LIFE Faithful to the "self-evident" truths enshrined in the Declaration of Independence, we assert the sanctity of human life and affirm that the unborn child has a fundamental individual right to life which cannot be infringed. We support a human life amendment to the Constitution and endorse legislation to make clear that the Fourteenth Amendment's protections apply to unborn children. We oppose using public revenues to promote or perform abortion or fund organizations which perform or advocate it and will not fund or subsidize health care which includes abortion coverage. We support the appointment of judges who respect traditional family values and the sanctity of innocent human life. We oppose the non-consensual withholding or withdrawal of care or treatment, including food and water, from people with disabilities, including newborns, as well as the elderly and infirm, just as we oppose active and passive euthanasia and assisted suicide.

Republican leadership has led the effort to prohibit the barbaric practice of partial birth abortion, permitted States to extend health care coverage to children before birth. We urge Congress to strengthen the Born Alive Infant Protection Act by exacting appropriate civil and criminal penalties to health care providers who fail to provide treatment and care to an infant who survives and abortion, including early induction delivery where the death of the infant is intended. We call for legislation to ban sex-selective abortions - gender discrimination in its most lethal form - and to protect from abortion unborn children who are capable of feeling pain; and we applaud U.S. House Republicans for leading the effort to protect the lives of pain-capable unborn children in the District of Columbia. We call for a revision of federal law 42 U.S.C. 289.92 to bar the use of body parts from aborted fetuses for research. We support and applaud adult stem cell research to develop lifesaving therapies, and we oppose the killing of embryos for their stem cells. We oppose federal funding of embryonic stem cell research.

We also salute the many states that have passed laws for informed consent, mandatory waiting periods prior to an abortion, and health protective clinic regulation. We seek to protect young girls from exploitation through a parental consent requirement; and we affirm our moral obligation to assist, rather than penalize, women challenged by an unplanned pregnancy. We salute those who provide them with counseling and adoption alternatives and empower them to choose live, and we take comfort in the tremendous increase in adoptions that has followed Republican legislative initiatives.”

Appendix B

Democratic Party 2012 Platform Statement on Abortion:

“Protecting A Woman's Right to Choose. The Democratic Party strongly and unequivocally supports Roe v. Wade and a woman's right to make decisions regarding her pregnancy, including a safe and legal abortion, regardless of ability to pay. We oppose any and all efforts to weaken or undermine that right. Abortion is an intensely personal decision between a woman, her family, her doctor, and her clergy; there is no place for politicians or government to get in the way. We also recognize that health care and education help reduce the number of unintended pregnancies and thereby also reduce the need for abortions. We strongly and unequivocally support a woman's decision to have a child by providing affordable health care and ensuring the availability of and access to programs that help women during pregnancy and after the birth of a child, including caring adoption programs.”